

Voices tell mum there's no shame

by SHARON PAINTIN

HIDING behind the veil of shame and embarrassment is something families of alcoholics know only too well.

For years Karen (not her real name) lived in the shadow of her alcoholic husband.

The couple were married for 11 years and have two sons, 11 and 9. However, the drinking problem grew from telltale signs to an unbearable problem, Karen said.

Even during their early married life, Rod (not his real name) drank to relax and enjoy social outings, she said.

The weekly shopping always included a carton of beer and over time that increased to three or four cartons.

They separated in February after the situation became intolerable and Karen refused to accept the violence that accompanied the drinking.

Believing it was not her fault and burying the shame empowered Karen to seek help and turn her life around.

After Rod moved out, Karen phoned a family crisis centre, which put her in touch with Drinking Family Services.

The service provided Karen with group counselling and she and the boys got involved in a drama group that let the kids act out situations they had experienced in the comfort of a make-believe environment.

Karen is now involved with the Voices program run by a group of local community services.

The program looks at the issues of families affected by alcohol, drugs and gambling.

Groups like Voices have shown Karen she is not alone.

"Voices lets people know they don't have to be ashamed," she said. "There are people out there to help you and talk about it."

Karen wants other families to know there are agencies to help and support them: "We are trying to make people very aware that it is there."

The group supports families of alcoholics, drug users and compulsive gamblers.

An information stall will be held next Monday in Main St. Blacktown. For details, call Voices on (008) 42 2599.